

¶ The argument vpon the later Epistle of S. Peter thapostle / by D. Erasmus of Ro|terodame.

**T** His Epistle / as it appeareth / Peter wrote / whan he was greatly growē in age, and almost at the pit|tes brinke, for in dede he maketh mencion of his death. He writeth generallye to all sortes of christianes, exhortinge them to purenes of lyfe, and by auncient examples and with the terroure of the laste iudgemēt frayeng them from fylthines: and he doeth vehemently blame them, whiche corrupte the myndes of the symple with peruerse doctrine, in denyeng the commynge of Christ.

¶ Thus endeth the Argument.

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¶ The paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the later Epistle of S. Peter thapostle.

¶ The first Chapter.

The texte.

¶ Simon Peter, a seruaunt and an Apostle of Iesus Christ, to them whiche haue obtained lyke precious faithe with vs thorowe the rightewesnes of our God and sauoure Iesus Christ. Grace be vnto you, and peace be multiplied thorow the knowledge of God and of Iesus our Lorde. Accordynge as his godly power hath geuen vnto vs al thynges that per|tayne vnto lyfe and godlynesse, thorow the knowledge of him that hath called vs by glory and vertue, by the which are geuē vnto vs, excellent and most great promyses, that by the meanes therof ye might be partetakers of the godlye nature, yf ye flye the corrupcion of worldly luste.

**I** Simon Peter / in tymes paste a diligent folower of Moyses law, and now a seruaunt and Embas|sador of Iesus Christ, whose gospel (euē as y• day light) wipeth and driueth awaye all the shadowes of the olde tel|stament, write vnto all maner of men without parcial ex|cepcion either of people, or religiō, either of kynde, or state, or yet condicion. For we esteme all people to be kynsfolkes and most nerely ioyned vnto vs, whosoeuer haue deserued to be made like vnto vs in the profession of the faith of the gospel, by the which, we haue atteyned true rightuousnes, not by circumcision, or by sacrifices of the lawe, but by the goodnes of our God, and by the deathe of our sauour Iesu Christ, who hath frely pardoned vs our olde synnes, to thentēt we should hence forthe folowe

gospellyke righteousnes, which dooeth not consiste in ceremonies, but in true godlines of mynde: & hath a certaine farre greater perfecciō than the Iewes righteousnes, whiche is nothinge but a shadowe of true righteousnes. And I praye, y<sup>e</sup> lyke as you haue yet hitherto gon abundantlye forward in the grace of y<sup>e</sup> gospel, alwayes somewhat augmentyng in thencreases of godlynes, & drawinge nerer brotherly concorde amonge your selues daylye more and more: so the liberall goodnes of God woulde vouchesafe to make perfite his gyftes in you: which Iewelless encrease so much y<sup>e</sup> more largely in you, as you grow forewarde into y<sup>e</sup> knowledge of God y<sup>e</sup> father, & of his sonne our Lord Iesu Christ, the acknowledginge of whome is eternall lyfe. For it is the chiefe poynte of saluacion, to acknowledge the autor of saluacion, that we chalenge no parte therof to our owne desertes and strengthes, or to the prescripcions of Moses lawe, inasmuche as whatsoeuer is perteyninge to true lyfe, and whatsoeuer belongeth vnto true godlynes, his diuine power hath bestowed it vnto vs, without helpe of circumcision, onely by faith, wherby we acknowlage God the father, from whome procede all thinges, and Iesu Christ, by whome onely we haue al thinges geuen vnto vs. These thinges are not geuen throughe our merites, but by his free bounteous gyfte, whiche of his owne accorde hathe called vs vnto the benefite of saluacion: and to them that were voyde of glory and vertue, he hath bestowed bothe his owne glorye and vertue: to thintent that wheras beinge adidicted vnto our owne vicious naughtines, lyke fylthye vyle slaues we scrued ydoles, we shoulde be engrafted vnto Christe, and be made bothe pure and glorious,

hauing y<sup>e</sup> wickednes taken out of the waye, wherin we were fylthily soyld. He hathe translated our vyle naughtines vpon himselfe, that he mighte choose vs of his owne free pleasure into y<sup>e</sup> fellowship of his glory: Our trespasses he hath taken vpon himselfe, that we might enioye his innocencie. Nowe these same are very great matters, but those are farre greater of & muche more excellencie, that are promysed vs in tyme to come, not by the lawe of Moses, as we haue often sayed before, but by thacknowlageing of Iesu Christ. But what is it, that is promysed? Forsoothe that albeit you perteyne not to the kynredde of the Iewes, yet you maye be made w<sup>th</sup> them companions of the diuine nature beyng chosen into the number of y<sup>e</sup> children of god, to possesse thenheritaunce, of immortal lyfe, so that you set your study vpon a certaine immortalitie by vncorrupte conuersacion in the meane season here in this worlde, and flee from al corrupcion of vices and naughtie lustes wherwith a mynde that is infected, tēdeth to euerlastinge deathe.

¶ And herunto geue all diligence: in your faith minister vertue: in vertue knowledge: in knowledge temperaunce, in temperaunce pacience: in pacience godlynesse: in godlynesse brotherly kyndnesse: in brotherly kyndnesse loue. For yf these thinges be amonge you, and be plenteous, they wyll make you that ye nether shalbe ydle nor vnfrutefull in the know|ledge of our Lorde Iesus Christ. But he that lacketh these thinges, is blynde and gropeth for the waye with his hande, and hath forgotten y<sup>e</sup> he was poured from his olde synnes▪

God hathe once geuen innocencye frely, and it is not inoughe to mainteine it, but applyng withall studious diligence, endeuour your selues to be made riche in well doinges, that your faith be not ydle, but that it be accompanied with good behauiour, that nothing be doone or sayed, but that whiche is ver|tuos. Than let good behauiour entreteyne knowlage, that you maye not onelly folowe the thinges that be vpright, but also discerne, what thinge, in what place, amonge whome, after what sorte, and by what meanes ought worthilye to be done. Let knowledge be accompanied with temperaunce, that the mynde beyng vnmoueably strong against all the wanton enticementes of the worlde, maye constantlye without shrinkynge folowe the thing, that it hathe iudged to be best. Vnto temperaunce let pacience be ioyned, that whan you doe wel, you maye chearefully suffer sorowes. For those men, whom the flatering pleasures of the worlde doe not bringe in to a fine fingred nicenes, are somtymes broken with impatient suffring of sorowes, with pacience let godlynes be present, that what soeuer you doe or suffre, you referre it to the glorye of God. Let godlynes be accompanied with brotherly charitie, that like as you loue God for himselfe, euen so for his sake you maye loue all them that professe God. And let brother|ly charitie be augmented and vpheaped with loue, to studye to doe good for all men, not onely them that are godly and Christian folkes, but also for them that are wicked. These are the frutes of an euangelicall faith, whiche yf you haue them abundantlye, shall brynge to passe that where you haue acknowledged our lorde Iesus Christ throughe faith, it should not be vnprofytable and vn|frutefull vnto you, althoughe you haue nothing to doe with circumcision. For in these thinges consisteth the whole summe of Christen godlynes: and yf any mā want thē, he hath professed Christ in vaine, forasmuche as he slydeth backe from the light of the Gospell in to his olde former darkenes, euen as it were a blynde man that groapeth the waye with his hande, and is caried aboute here|awaye and therawaye throughe the mases of worldly lustes: neither seeth he

the way to come to the felowship of Christ, beyng vnthankfull also for the benefite of Christ, of whome where he is once frely clensed from his olde transgressions, yet as a man forgetfull of this so exceedyng a mercye, he slydeth backe in to the same againe.

The texte.

¶ Wherefore brethrē, geue the more diligence for to make your callynge and eleccion sure by good workes. For yf ye doe suche thinges, ye shall neuer fall. Yea, and by this meanes an entringe in, shalbe minstre• vnto you abundantly into the euerlastinge kyngdome of our Lord and sauour Iesus Christ. Wherefore, I wil not be negligent to put you alwayes in remembraunce of suche thinges, though ye knowe them your selues, and he stablished in the present trueth. Notwithstandyng I thinke it mete (as longe as I am in this tabernacle) to sterve you vp by putting you in remembraunce, for asmuche as I am sure, that shortly I must put of this my tabernacle▪ euen as our Lorde Iesus Christ shewed me. I wyll euer also geue my diligence, that ye maye haue wherwith to sterve vp the remem|braunce of these thinges after my departinge.

And therefore, brethren, let it not make you to lyue in a securitie and to be careles, in that the goodnes of God, hathe (whan you deserued nothing) called you vnto the profession of the gospell, hauyng once pardoned all the synnes of your former lyfe: but endeuour your selues so muche the more, that the goodnes of God, wherwith he hath called you, wherwith he hath chosen you, be n•t turned to your destruccion and heape of damnacion, in case beyng forgetful of his bounteous gentilues, you be tomlbed backe in to y• same state, from whence he raunsomed you with his owne death. But procure rather with well doinges, that God seine not to haue called and chosen you in vaine. And some parte of this mater lyeth euen in you. For yf you consyder, from whence God hathe call|led you, to what thinges he hath called you, and what rewardes he hathe set forthe for you, and yf you wyll preace therunto by these meanes, whiche I haue declared a lytell before, you shall neuer slyppe out of the right course of godlynes. For yf you preace this waye, Goddes assistinge helpe shalbe plenteouslye present with you, and shal succour, you with his riche relyefe, that at length belynge conquerours of this worlde, you maye attayne to the euerlastinge kyngldome of our Lorde and sauour Iesu Christ, to possesse with him the treasures of heauen for whose sake you haue set naught by the treasures of y• earthe. The rewarde is exceedyng great, but it must be procured with exceedyng greate diligence. Wherefore I wyl neuer cease to geue you warnyng of these maters, although I suppose it not necessarie, seyng you both doe and remembre, what you ought to doe: and are also confirmed now by longe processe of godlynes in the acquainted knowledge of the trueth a great

while, whiche hauynge em|braced, you constantlye folowe yet hitherto: notwithstanding to thintent you maye more and more watche styll in that you haue begonne, I reckon it my parte, that remembringe my lordes precepte▪ whiche commaunded me, y• beyng conuerted my selfe, I shoulde confirme my brethren, as longe as I lyue among you (beyng a straunger vpon earthe) in y• tabernacle of this sely body. I should sterve vp & pricke forewarde the studye of godlynes in you, and in dede so muche the more, because I knowe, I shall shortly be stripped out of the dwellynge of this sely bodye, and chaunge this exile of the earthe for y•fraunchised free cite of heauen. For our Lorde Iesus Christ signified so vnto me, whome I serue yet hitherto as a souldier in this tabernacle. Nowe therfore I shall geue dily|gence, that these matters maye in the meane space be so surely fixed in youre

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hartes with often admonicion, that you maye remembre them after my deathe, whan I can not warne you by worde of mouthe. For seying the thinge is most certaine, that you haue receyued of vs, it behoueth you not to swarue from it.

The texte.

¶ For we haue not folowed deccatfull fables, when we opened vnto you the power and commynge of our Lorde Iesus Christ: but with our eyes we sawe his maiestie: euen then verely when he receaued of God the father honour and glory, and when there came suche a voyce to him from the excellent glorye. This is my deare beloued sonne, in whome I haue delyte. This voyce we hearde come from heauē, when we were with him in the holy mount. We haue also a right sure worde of prophecie, wherunto (yf ye take hede) as vnto a light that shyneth in a darcke place▪ ye do well vntil the daye dawne, and the day starre aryse in your hartes. So that ye first knowe this: that no prophecye in the scripture hath any priuace enterpretacion. For the scripture came neuer by the wyll of man: but holy men of God speake, as they were moued by the holy ghost.

For our doctrine was not suche gayre, as the philosophers teache, whose drifte is to perswade by crafulye conueyed fables, and humayne subtilties, the thing that they them selues vnderstande not, and dysagree also amonge them selues. But we haue in no wyse folowed these wayes, in openynge vnto you the power and comminge of our lorde Iesu Christ, and in preachinge vnto you his maie|stie, whiche we haue sene with these iyes. For he vouchesafe to exhibite vnto certaine of his owne afore his death some special token, with what mightie po|wer and with what glorye

he shall once come, to iudge the quicke and the dead, and what wonderfull felicitie he shal geue vnto them, that loue him stedfastlye. For where God the father endued him all wholly with glorye and honour, in|somuche that his countenaunce shoone as bright as the sunne, and his clothes were more white than the snowe, so farre, that mannes iyes coulde not abyde to beholde the heauenly syght, and there came also an exceedynge most honourable testimonie of the fathers voyce, whiche was brought downe from highe vn|to him from the glorious maiestie of y<sup>r</sup> father. And it was after this sorte: This is my welbeloued sonne, whiche hathe delygthed my mynde, heare him. There coulde haue ben no witnesse geuen, eyther more fully or more excellent. And it was pronounced, not of any prophet, but of the fathers owne maiestie. These thinges we haue sene with our iyes, these haue we hearde with our eares, whan we were present with him in the holy mount Thabor. If so be that the pro|phetes playne oracles be in a great weightie estimacion among you, which pro|phecied by figuratyue darke shadowes of Christ: of much more grautie ought so euident a declaracion by the father himselfe of his sonne be. The prophetes agree with the fathers voice, yf a man doe rightly interprete them. They with their promisses prepare as it were mennes myndes to the trueth of his gospell, in that they shadowe and as it were couertly poynt out, the thing that the gos|pell doeth openly preache. Therefore I doe not disallowe, that the lewes beyng vehementlye geuen to the prophetes prophecies, seke there for the com|myng of Messias. For it is a steppe somewhat vnto the faythe of the gospel, to beleue that Christ shoulde come. For a man shall the more soner beleue that Christe is come, yf he be perswaded that he shoulde come. Therefore there is good hope of him, that beyng not yet lightened with the lyght of the Gospell, is attentue vnto the prophetes, as to a candell appearinge in a darcke place. For it is better to haue some lyght than no light, tyll the sunne come, and the daye dawne, to dryue awaye all darkenes, and to obscure euen that can|dell,

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and that the daye sterre of gospell preachinge maye shyne bryght in your hartes, whiche declareth that the sonne is at hande. The saynges of the pro|phetes are to this vse profytable, yf they that reade them, consider that y<sup>r</sup> scrip|ture of prophecyinge before hande is darkly hydden vnder couerte of figures, & can not be vnderstāden without interpretaciō. And y<sup>t</sup> is not euery mannes in|terpretacion, nor after euery mannes arbitrement. For the prophetes, whiche spake of thinges before hande, did not speake after their owne braine nor after the deuyse of their owne mynde, but where they were holy men and pure from al humane lustes, y<sup>r</sup> holy gost inspired their hartes, & vsing them as his instru|mētes, he

signified his mynde vnto vs by thē accordingly. The thing y<sup>•</sup> men set forth by mannes deuysse, may be perceaued by mannes wytte. But y<sup>•</sup> thing y<sup>e</sup> is set forthe by the inspiracion of the holy gost, requireth an interpretoure inspired with the lyke spirite. They that applye the thing, whiche is spoken of Christe, vnto any worldlye king: they that drawe the thing that is spoken of the lyfe of heauen, vnto the felicitie of this worlde: they that interpret the thing that is spoken of the treasures of the mynde, of the commodities of this worlde: doe very farre swerue from the mysticall meanyng of the prophecy. Nether are they easely perswaded that Christ is come, in that by false interpretacion of the prophecie, they imagine to them selues a certaine earthlye Messias, suche a one as he shewed not him selfe to be. And for that cause they acknowledge him not, not that he varieth from the spirituall ymage of the prophecye, but that he differeth from the ymagined ydole of falsly feyned interpretacion.

¶ The .ii. Chapter.

The texte.

¶ There were false prophetes also amonge the people, euen as there shalbe false teachers amonge you, whiche preuely shall brynge in damnable sectes (euen denyng the Lorde that hathe bought them) and bryng vpon them selues swyfte damnacion, and many shal folowe their damnable wayes, by whome the waye of trueth shalbe euyl spoken of, and thorowe couetousnes shall they with fained wordes make marchaundyse of you, whose iudgement is now not farre of, and their damnacion slepeth not.

**W**hosoeuer he be, that prophecieth after thaffeccion of his owne mynde, is falsely named a prophete. Whosoeuer he be, that interpreteth the prophetes sayinge, vnto his owne couetous appetites, is a false interpretoure. There were in tymes past false prophetes euen amonge the Iewes, whiche eyther to pyke a thanke at y<sup>•</sup> princes hande, or elles for vauntage sake, or for haultred of other, prophecied the thinge, whiche the spirite of God spake not, but that they had in their assemblies imagined them selues. They countrefaicting their behauiour as thoughe they had ben true prophetes, deceaued folyshe people, and repyned against the true prophetes with their lynges. And so after my deccasse also there shall aryse suche, as shall falsely boaste them selues to be teachers of the gospell, where as they shall be nothings elles but maisters of falseheade. They shall swarue from the doctrine of the gospell, and bringe in mennes gloses: in stede of the trueth that bringeth saluaciō, they shall cloute in pernicious sectes, for their owne gayne, that pertaine rather to their owne glorye and their owne tyrannye, than vnto Christes affaires: and they shall goe on styll into so great madnesse, that they shall not be

afrayed vnkyndlye to denye euen their Lorde Iesus, by whose bloude they were redemed, and whose name

they once professed, and shall be more wicked than the very heathens, whiche neuer professed Christ. By the whiche their dooinges they shall prouoke the vengeance of God vpon them selues, and it shall not onely nothinge auayle them, that they once professed Christ, but they shall also pull vpon them selues speddy destruccion, God taking vengeance vpon them. Howbeit it were but a small matter, yf none were lost, but onely they, which are already loste, but they shall also drawe many with them into destruccion. For false doctrine teachers shall fynde disciples of their owne, and bearinge them selues boldly vpon thē, they shall not be afrayed to rayle vpon the gospels trueth whiche you haue receaued of vs: nether shall they purely handle the worde of the gospel, because they see it maketh nothinge auayleably to their gredynes, but beyng bent vnto their owne priuate lucre they shall begyle your simple playnesse with feyned comunicacion, not going about to wyne you vnto Christe, but to plucke to them selues the greatest gayne they can from you. For they see that the gospels doctrine is smally pleasaunt vnto them, whiche are cralled with the delyces of this worlde, they see it is no nyce delycate matter, to doe as wee doe, defēde the synceritie of the gospels doctrine constauntly against the wicked, through all deathes. Therefore shall they defyle the true doctrine of Christ: and in stede of it, they shall teache those thinges, that are pleasaunt to the grosse hearers rather than holsome: and those thinges that purchase them substaunce and re|nounge in the worlde and not with God. For they shall couet rather for glo|rye and pleasure that shal last but a while, to purchase euerlastinge destruccion bothe to them selues and to others, than throughe shorte tormentes of the body to thrust out vnto felicitie that neuer shal die. Beware you folow not those guildes, excepte that you wyll goe streight waye into destruccion. Nether let it del|ceauue you, in that they are alofte in hyghe estate in this worlde, in that they are riche, in that they lyue at their owne ease. They shall not long haue the fruicion of this continuaunce of false felicitie. For lyke as the godly shal in a while at|teyne their rewardes, which God hath alreadye decreed long agoe, euen so these mennes payne maketh speddy hast vnto them, nether doeth their destruccion slepe that shall sodainlye oppresse those that be careles and lyue in a securitie. They maye deceauue mennes iudgementes, but they can not beguyle God. Howsoever men, ouer whome they haue autoritie, doe forgeue them, God, which is afrayed of no mans myght wyll not forgeue them.



¶ For yf God spared not the aungels that synned, but cast them downe into hell, and delyuered them into chaynes of darcknes, to be punished, to be kept vnto iudgement: nether spared the olde worlde, but saued Noe the eight preacher of rightewysnes, and brought in the floude vpon the worlde of the vngodly, and turned the cities of zodom and Gomor into asshes: ouerthrew them, damned them, and made on them an ensample vnto those that after shoulde lyue vngodlye. And iust Lot vexed with the vnclenly conuersacion of the wicked, delyuered he. For he beyng righteous, and dwelling among them in seying and hearing, vexed his righteous soule from daye to daye with their vnlawfull dedes. The Lorde knoweth howe to delyuer the godly out of temptacion, and to reserue the vn|iuste vnto the daye of iudgement for to be punyshed: but che●y them that walke after the flesshe in the lust of vnclennes, & despyse auctoritie. Presumptuous are they, & stubborne, whiche feare not to speake euyll of them that excell in worshippe. When the angels whiche are greater bothe in power and might, receaue not of the Lorde taylynge iudge|ment against them selues. But these as brute beastes, naturally brought forthe to be takē and destroyed, speake euyll of the thinges that they vnderstande not, and shall pearisshe in their awne destruccion, and receaue the rewarde of vnrightewysnes.

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For why shoulde he spare them now, seying that in tymes past he spared non the very angels, whiche had offended, but threw them downe headlong out of heauen, bounde them with the cheines of theuerlastynge darke night, and caste them in to the prison of hell, to be reserued to this ende, that hauyng sentence of damnacion in the last iudgement, they may be cōmitted to eternal tormētes for euermore? wyll he suffer pryde to be vnpunyshed in men, whiche suffred it not in the angelles? Shall the thing be vnpunyshed in them, that they doe after the light of the gospell manifestlye opened vnto them, & after so many bounteous benefites frely geuen vnto them by him, which spared not the olde world (beyng tude without knowledge) but beyng greued at mennes viciousnes, whan the world was vniuersally spotted with wicked maners, he brought the floude vpon it, and dispatched al mankynde, sauynge Noe, whō beyng the eyght parson his wyll was to haue saued out of so mightte a great multitude of mortal men, because the residue hauinge contemned the gentle suffraunce of God, he onely in makynge the Arke testified, that he drad the vengeaunce of the almighty. And wyl not he punyshe the people of these dayes, which with powryng downe a showre of brimstone, brought so many cities, and so florissinge a cuntrye of Sodome and Somore into asshes, and marred them so vtterly, that there re|maineth nothing, but an horrible and a pestilent stinkyng ma●rice, for a testi|mony what payne abyde they, whiche with lyke wickednes prouoke y• wrath of God vpon

them selues? And lyke as vnto them their owne wickednes was their owne destruccion, euen so the innocencie of Lot turned to his saluacion: vnto whome whan the abominable felowes intended violence, and would with their abhominable rageing lustes oppresse the chaste godly man, God pulled him out of the companie of the wicked, among whome it was the most greuous payne for him to lyue. For in asmuche as he was pure and chaste bothe in eyes and eares, it was a greuous torment for a godly disposed mynde, to hea•e daily, and see daily, the thinges that he abhorred withall his whole hearte. By these it is sufficiently declared, that God neuer suffreth, any man to lose the rewarde of his innocencie, neither any mans wickednes to be vnpunished: although he gentlye beare w<sup>t</sup> some for a season, y<sup>•</sup> they might once repent: yea & though he suffre his owne sometime to be tēpted for a while, yet whā tyme is, he can dlyuer the godly out of sorowes: & contrarye wyse he can reserue y<sup>•</sup> vngodly against the daye of the last iudgement to be punished with eternall tormentes for euermore. No kynde of vnrighteousnes shalbe suffred vnpunished. But those shall specially suffre paynes, whiche as it were distrustinge the pro|mises of the gospell, folowe in this worlde, that whiche is delectable to the body, seruyng fylthy outragious lustes, wherwith they defyle their whole lyfe on euery syde. And that they may be the more wicked, they double their wickednes with violence, & contemne those that be set in publyke autoritie, beyng knacke hardye, and shameles, and are not ashamed to taylor vpon suche as are men of dignitie. And these thinges are wretched men, hardye to doe, where as the an|gelles beyng farre more excellent in power and strength, althoughe otherwyse wicked yet they proceded not into so muche shameles hardynes as to abyde to speake euyll of God: and where as they in other matters neglected the wyll of God, yet in this point they were afrayed to offende him, and yelded vnto thau|toritie of god. But these men beyng more vngracions than the wicked spirites,

like brute bestes borne to thys ende, that they maye bee caught and destroyled, forasmuche as they are not afrayed to backbyte and mysteporte theyr superiours: not knowing this in the meane while, for whose sake they speake euyll of them. Like as they through theyr corrupte condicions procure destruc|cion to them selues, euen so shall they peryshe like bestes, and receyue a wor|thy rewarde of theyr wicked life: •orsomuche as they reken it a swete and ioylly gaye life, if they cast all shame quite away, and geue them selues in the open daylyght vnto myrthe, ryot, and filthye voluptuous lustes. For yet they haue some shame remaynyng with them that doo these thynges in the night.

They count it pleasure to lyue delyeysty for a season. Spottes they are and fylthynesse, which lyue at pleasure in theyr own deceyuable wayes, feastyng and scornynge you: hauing eyes ful of adoutry, and that cannot cease from synne, begylyng vnstable soules. Deattes they haue exercised with robbery. They are cursed children which haue forsaken the ryght waye, and are gone astraye folowyng the waye of Balaam the sonne of Bosor, whiche loued the rewarde of vnryghtewesnesse: but was rebuked of hys iniquitye. The same and dumme beast, speaking with mans voyce forbad the madnesse of the prophete.

Who would beleue that these were menne? They are rather filthe and spottes, who in their filthie glotonous banquettinges (wherin being wretchedly de|ceaued thei repose the hole Sūme of felicitie) vaunt against you, as though you were madde menne, bycause you haue not the fruicion of the commodities of thys present life. And in the meane tyme riot prouoketh outrageous luste, and whan they are once wyne dronken, they haue beastly lusting eies, nether haue they mynde of any thing elles, than vpon whoremonging, and other kyndes of wikednes. For they can not, whan they haue once cast awaye reason, whan they haue ben once dronken with wyne, ceasse from naughty doing, but they skyppe from wikednes to wikednes, so muche that it is not ynough for them to lyue vngraciously them selues, except they intangle and allure other mens myndes (not yet cōfirmed in vertue) vnto theyr filthynes. Now perchaunce it were more tolerable, if they offended in nothyng but in riot and lecherous lust: But there is no kynde of vice but they haue it. Like as they filthily make away that they haue, euen so filthily doo they proude to make prodigally awaye, hauyng a mynde and a wytte practised vnto couetousnes, vnto deceate and vnto taume, doing euery thing what so euer it be, for auauntage sake: and for lute curse the good and the godly, and being corrupte with money swaue from the right waye: and in that poynt resemble theyr father Balaam the sonne of Bosor, who, whan he knewe what was best, yet being corrupt with wicked see, he went about to curse them, whom God was mercifull vnto: & couetousnes brought him into so great a blyndnes, y<sup>e</sup> he was rebuked of his asse, & where as he being a madde doting mā had cast of his mans mynde, y<sup>e</sup> brute beast speaking in a mans voyce restrayned the prophetes madnes, seing more w<sup>t</sup> het bodyly eies than he saw w<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> eies of his mynde, bicause he was strik<sup>e</sup> blynd through coueiousnes of money.

The texte.

These are welles without water: cloudes that are caried with a tempest, to whom the myst of darckenes is reserued for euer. For when they haue spoken the greateswellynge wordes of vanyty, they entyse thorowe lustes in the voluptuousnes of the fleshe them that were cleane escaped: euen them that now lyue in errour: while they promes them libertie, where as they

themselves are the bonde seruauntes of corrupcion. For of whom a man is ouercome, vnto y<sup>e</sup> same is he brought in bondage. For yf they (after they haue escaped frō y<sup>e</sup> fylthines of the world thorow y<sup>e</sup> knowledge of y<sup>e</sup> Lord & the sauour Iesus Christe) are yet tangled agayn therin, & ouercome, then is y<sup>e</sup> latter ende worsse w<sup>th</sup> them thē y<sup>e</sup> beginning. For it had bene better for thē, not to haue knowen y<sup>e</sup> way of rightewesnes, then after they haue knowen it, to turne frō the holy cōmaundement that was geuen vnto them. But the same is hapened vnto them y<sup>e</sup> is vsed to be spoken by the true pro•erbe. The dogge is tur|ned to his domet agayn, & y<sup>e</sup>•ow y<sup>e</sup> was washed is turned agayn to her waloing in y<sup>e</sup> mier.

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These are they that promyse a certayn wonderfull and news doctrine, where as they bryng nothyng worthy the profession of the Gospel, being like welles that lacke water, whereunto if a manne come athurst, he can fynde nothing but mudde and claye: and like vnto mysly clowdes, that are dryuen hither and th•|ther with the storme of wyndes, and seme as they would geue rayne vnto the thrustye grounde, where as for all that, not so much as one droppe of holsome doctrine falleth from them. They promyse the lyght of the Gospelles doctrine, and wrappe those folkes in darkenes of errorrs, whom euerlastyng darkenesse abydeth for in hell. For whan with their lyeng woordes they speake of certayn great hygh matters, & with that hope entice and snare them whiche begynne to amende theyr condicions, they deceaue them and wrappe them in the delites of the flesh, & the voluptuous pleasures of this life, promysing that they wil dely|uer other frō errorr, whā they them selues are occupied in the greatest errorrs of al, and promysing other men deliuerance from synnes, whan they them sellues are the very bonde slaues of filthynes. For of whosoeuer a mā is ouercome, and at whose appoyntement he lyueth his bonde seruaunt he is called by right. For it auayleth thē nothyng at all to haue ben once frely delyuered frō the bon|dage of synnes, if they fall to the same state agayn by their own accorde: but the bondage is so much the more vile, and so much the more wretched, bicause it is procured without cōstraynt, after the tasting of libertie. That which was done amysse before the Gospell preached, is a great parte long of errorr, and long of Ignoraunce. But they whiche hauing once acknowlaged by the preachyng of the Gospell, oure lorde and sauour Iesu Christe, haue through Baptisme relnounced the filthynes of this world, and professed a pure and an heauenly life: if they be ouercome agayn with lustes, and wrapped in theyr olde vncleanesse, theyr baptisme doeth not only nothing helpe thē at al, but also they are in worse state, than they were before they knewe Christe. For his offence is the lesse, that synneth through ignoraunce. And they shalbee the more greuously

damned, whiche haue enlarged the cryme of wikednes with the vice of vnthankefulnes. Therefore it had ben better for them to haue not knowen the Gospelles doctrine at al, whiche teacheth Innocencye and purenes, than after they knewe and relceyued it, to swarue from the holy commaundement that was once deliuered vnto them. For what other thing is befallen them, than that which is truly vsed to bee spoken by a commune prouerbe? The dogge •losseth vp agayn that he hath once caste vp, and the washen sowe turneth agayn to walowe her selfe in the myre. It is but a lost labour for the dogge to haue purged his stomake with vomite, if he take agayn that he cast vp. And the sowe hath washed awaye her fowle stynking myre in cleane water in vayne, if she, by and by after she is washen, returne to the soylinges that she had gone from.

The .iii. Chapter.

The texte.

¶ This is the seconde epistle that I now wryte vnto you beately beloued, wherwith I stete vp your sincere mynde, by puttyng you in remembraunce, that ye maye be myndfull of the wordes (which were tolde before of the holy prophetes) and also the commaundement of vs whiche be Apostles of the Lorde and sauour. Thys fyrst vnderstande, that were shall come in the laste dayes mockers (in dysceatefulnes) which wyll walke after theyr owne iustes, and saye: Where is the promes of his comming? For sence the fathers •yed, all thinges continue in the same estate wherin they were at the beginnyng. For thys they knowe not (and that wylfully) how that the heauens & greate whyle ago were, and the erth oure of the water appeared vp thorowe the water, by the worde of God: by the whiche thynges the worlde that then was, peryshed, beyng ouer runne with water. But the heauens and erth which are now, be kept by hys worde in store, and reserued vnto fyre agaynst the daye of iudgement and perdicyon of vngodly men.

**D**earely beloued, these matters I beate in with many wordes vn|to you, and euen now in these myne other letters I warne you of the self same thing, not that I doubt of the vprightnesse of your mynde, but that you may haue in remembraunce more and more the thinge that you know and hold, and do that you do with the more harty chearefulnes and constaunt stedfastnes. You shall •e in the lesse peril of hurting by their vngracious doctrine, if you remēbre, that it was spoken of by the holy prophetes in tymes paste, whiche gaue warnyng to beware of this kynde of men. And if you do remembre that we gaue the same precept, whiche are the Apostles of the lorde and sauour Iesu Christ, who for|had that

nomanne should geue eare to such as in stede of the Gospelles truth,  
 bring in pernicious doctrine. This therfore knowe you fyrst of all, that  
 there shall come hereafter, not preachers but mockers, being connyngly  
 furnyshed with sleighes and subtyll deceates, to beguyle the ignoraunt  
 withall: whiche shall not folowe those thynges that Christe taught vs, but  
 like as their life shall be after the lustes of their owne hart, so shall they  
 teache after their owne appetite, those thinges that shalbe fitte for suche  
 a maner of life. For inasmuche as theyr life is filthy, they shall not be  
 desyrous of the lordes commyng: And for that cause sake shall they  
 perswade bothe to them selues and others, that he shal not come agayn,  
 and saye: where is the promysed resurreccion? where is the iudgement?  
 where are the sondrye sortes of rewardes according to the desertes of  
 lyuing? whan cōmeth he that is loked for day by day in vayne? For they  
 shal thinke surely that he shall neuer come, bycause hys commyng is put  
 of for a tyme. What token (saye they) is there of the resurreccion? Our  
 fathers are dead one after an other, and neuer one hathe risen agayn to  
 life yet hytherto. And like as sence the creacion of the worlde, all thinges  
 are engendred by the enter|chaungable courses of the dyeng and of the  
 lyuing, euen so vnto thys tyme re|mayneth the same course of nature,  
 where as by mutacion of the worlde that hathe ben before, we may gather  
 that there shalbe a newnes hereafter. And like as the mutacion chaunced,  
 what tyme they loked not for it that lyued after theyr owne fylthy lustes,  
 euen so shall the nouacion happen, whether we belleue it, or not beleue  
 it. For thys thyng they are not ware of, or (as I suppose rather) they  
 dissemble to knowe, that the heauens were created long a goe, and also  
 the earthe, which the waters, wherwith it was couered, made bare, a great  
 power of waters also hanging alofte. And whan mankynde was almoste  
 alto|gether defiled with vices, God being offended, sent the flood and  
 destroyed the world of that tyme, reseruing only eight persons, which  
 had folowed Innocēcy.

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This vniuersall iudgement God exercised at that tyme, in poureing and  
 re|newing the earth through water. Than the heauens contynue yet still as  
 they were created, and they are reserued to fyre, by the whiche they shall  
 also be pur|ged in the daye of iudgement, whan the wicked shalbe  
 destroyed by fyre, like as in times paste they perished by water.  
 Forasmuche than as it is a thing moste certayn that that daye shall come,  
 it maketh no matter, whether it come later or sooner: This only standeth  
 vs in hande to prouide for, that when so euer it cō|meth, it fynde not vs  
 vnready. We in out conceytes thinke some thinges leng, & some thinges  
 shorte: but vnto God there is nothing, neyther shorte nor long. In his  
 promisses he foloweth not the appetites of vs, but his owne eternall &  
 vnchaungeable decreed counsail, vnto whome nothyng is ●●●er paste nor

to come, but al thinges are present. But vnto vs what so euer he h●●h promised, he exhibiteth in the tune that he hath appointed before hande to him self. For elles, w<sup>h</sup>im al is one whether there be one day past or a thousand yeares. With the same faithful assurednes doeth he performe the thing whiche he performeth the later, that he doeth the thyng he doeth more spedilyer. For as concernyng him selfe, he hathe performed euen now the thing, that he hathe purposed to per|forme. For he dooeth not chaunge his purpose and after the maner of delayers prorogue and put of his promyse as some falsly iudge of him, measuring God after their own condicions: but he prescribeth the space to be longer somtymes for your sake, because vpon his tendre mercye and gentilnes he woulde haue none to perysh, but is desitous to haue all men once to repent, that those whiche peryshe, haue no cause to fynde fault that they wanted space to chaunge their life in to better. And that daye shall come vnloked for, and shall come creping vpon men, none otherwise, than a thefe in the night cometh vpon them that are a sleape. In that daye there shall be so greate violence of fyre, that the heauens shall passe with a mightie greate force in to an other kinde: But the elementes, whervpon this lower world consisteth, shalbe dissolued with heate: and fynally the earthe, and the thinges therin conteyned, shalbee butned with fyre, and all the whole nature of thinges shalbee cleane purged. And if it bee of necessitie, that all thinges shalbe so pure, that these thinges shall also be dissolued, whiche offende not: howe muche standeth it vs in hande diligently to endeuour, that that daye maye fynde vs throughly purged and vpright in all holynes of life, and in all studious affayres of godlynes. In the meane season this muste bee with muche spedynes forecaste, that you be alwaye in a readynes, whan so euer that daye shall come, whose straight iudgement no manne shalbee hable to escape: whiche shall suffre no thyng to be impure, so muche, that the heauens must be dissolued with fyre, and the elementes con|strayned to melt with heate. And after this, we loke, accor|dyng to hys promisse, for new heauens and a newe earthe, that haue no corrupcion, no fault: that we, in whome shalbe no corrupt mynde, maye haue the fruicion of them being vncorrupt.

The texte.

¶ Dearly beloued, be not ignoraunt of this one thing, howe that one daye is with the Lorde, as a thousande yeare, and a thousande yeare as one daye. The Lorde y<sup>•</sup> hath pro|mised is not slacke, as some men count slacknes: but is pacient to vs warde: for asmuch as he would haue no man lost: but wyll receaue all men to repentaunce. Neuertheles the day of the Lorde wyll come as a thefe in the night, in the whiche daye the heauens shall passe awaye in maner of a tempeste, and the elementes shall melte with heate, the carthe also and the worckes that are therin shall burne. Seyng then that all these



things shall pe|rysshe, what maner persons ought ye to be in holy conuersacion and godlynes: lokyng for and vasting vnto the commynge of the daye of God, by whome the heauens shal perisshe with fyre, and the elementes shall melt with heare. Neuertheles, we (accordynge to his promes) loke for a newe heauen and a new earth, wherin dwelleth rightewesnes. Wher|fore dearly beloued, seyng that ye loke for suche thinges, be diligent that ye maye be foude of him in peace, without spotte and vndefyled. And suppose that the longe sufferynge of the Lorde is faluacion, euen as our dearely beloued brother Paule also (accordinge to the wysedome geuen vnto him) hath wrytten vnto you, yea, almoost in euery epistle, speaking of suche thinges: amonge whiche are many thinges harde to be vnderstande, whiche they that are vniearned, and vnstable, peruert, as they do also the other scriptures vnto their owne destruccion. Ye therfore beloued (seyng ye be warned afore hande) beware, lest ye (with other men) be also plucked awaye thorowe the erreure of the wycked, and fall from your owne stedfastnes. But growe in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lorde and sauilour Iesus Christ. To whome be glory bothe nowe and for euer. Amen.

Wherefore most dearely beloued brethren, haue this so fearfull a iudgemēt alwayes before your eyes, and geue dilygence, that whan the lorde commeth, he maye fynde you pure and vnblameable, not onely before menne, whose iudgel|mētes are many tymes deceaued, but also before hi. For he is pure in dede, that is pure in the iudgement of God. And althoughe paraduenture it be long ere that daye come, construe it not so, as thoughe he woulde not come at all, but consydre that this tender sufferauce of the lorde, wherwith he geueth all men space to repent, doeth care for mennes saluacion: of whiche matters our mooste deare brother and folowe in office, Paule wrote vnto you, so muche the more habundantly, as God gaue him the more plenteous gyfte of wysedome: and in almost all his epistles exhorteth you to loke for this daye, sometyme speakinge after suche a sorte, as though the daye of the lorde were already now at hande: that he might the rather prycke you forward to the studye of godlynes, where as that daye (because it is vncertaine) oughte to be looked for, so as thoughe he woulde come this daye, but yet after suche wyse, that no man prescribe a tyme certaine. These and some other matters Paule according to his high wisdom, myngled in his Epistles. And wheras he spake them most rightly that coulde be, yet the ignoraunt and inconstaunt persons wrest them with a peruerse in|terpretacion, as they doe the other scriptures, to their owne destruccion, that the thing whiche is healthe vnto the good, maye be turned, throughe their owne faulte, in to venome vnto them. Therefore brethren, sence you are so many waies warned before hande bothe of me and of Paule, take hede, that you be not delceyued, as other are, with the fraude of abominable men, and fall awaye from your substaunciall stedfastnes, whiche you haue expressed yet hitherto: but ra|ther geue dilygence, that you maye continually encrease and goe forward in the



giftes and knowledge of our lorde and sauour Iesu Christe, vnto whome  
be glorye bothe now in this lyfe, and for euer worlde without ende.

Amen.

Thus endeth the Paraphrase vpon the seconde Epistle of thapostle S. Peter.